

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**Office of the Inspector General**

Inspector General



January 14, 2003

The Honorable Anthony A. Williams  
Mayor  
District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 600  
Washington, D.C. 20004

RE: Management Implication Report on the District of Columbia Government  
Applicant Evaluation Process (**MIR-2003-2**)

Dear Mayor Williams:

The purpose of this Management Implication Report (MIR) is to alert you to the fact that the District government continues to be victimized by applicants for employment who submit fictitious resumes and otherwise falsify the District government's employment application. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) provides these reports when we believe that a serious matter requires the immediate attention of District government agency heads. In this case, internal control weaknesses associated with the employment application process requires agencies to re-evaluate the efficacy of their hiring and promotion procedures.

The District government recently resolved several cases where high-level officials misrepresented their qualifications on resumes and other supporting documentation submitted for the purpose of evaluating their suitability for employment or promotion. In addition, the OIG has investigated a number of other individuals who have gained employment and/or promotion with the District government after submitting false applications and related personal information. The OIG believes these misrepresentations could have been identified prior to the hiring or promotion of these employees if the agencies made a more concerted effort to verify the personal information submitted by the applicants.

**FINDINGS**

The standard employment application available for use by all District government agencies sufficiently queries applicants to provide relevant and material personal information necessary to assist in hiring determinations. It also sufficiently warns

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applicants as to the importance of providing truthful information under penalty of law. Nevertheless, the competitive nature of seeking employment with the District government lends itself to the risk that unethical applicants will falsify the employment application or respond to questions in an evasive manner. Hiring officials who assume all applicants -even at the executive level - are truthful and honest in the application process do so at their peril.

Further, agencies that contract with a recruiting firm to locate suitable candidates for employment should not assume that the firm has verified the accuracy of all personal information furnished by a candidate. Our investigations have revealed that due diligence has not been uniformly applied in the screening process. In order to identify applicant misrepresentations, servicing personnel must ensure that thorough background checks are conducted, to include verification of educational credentials, licenses/certificates, employment history, and a criminal records check where appropriate as authorized by law.

A number of well-publicized cases illustrate the problem and highlight the adverse consequences that can befall the District government when officials responsible for hiring and promoting are not vigilant.

- Ronnie FEW, former Fire & Emergency Medical Services Department (FEMS) Chief, submitted a resume and profile/biography that contained inaccurate information concerning his educational background and receipt of awards. He has since resigned.
- Three Deputy FEMS Chiefs submitted resumes with evasive, inaccurate or unclear information concerning their education or employment histories. Two of the Deputy Chiefs have since resigned.
- Saamir KAISER, formerly employed as General Counsel to the D.C. Chief Financial Officer and attorney with the D.C. Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority, obtained these positions through fraudulent representations of his professional licensure and academic achievements. He has since resigned and has been prosecuted and convicted of related fraud charges.
- A former D.C. Parks and Recreation Director misstated his previous job titles on the resume he submitted for this position. He too resigned after these misstatements were publicly revealed.

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- A senior agency administrator was hired, in part, on the strength of her academic credentials, wherein she claimed to have earned a PhD. In fact, the degree was of questionable validity and obtained from a university publicly identified as a “diploma mill” established by a con artist investigated and prosecuted by the FBI for fraud.
- An applicant for employment was hired for an important technology position in the District government on the strength of a claim to have earned a bachelor’s degree in computer science. The applicant was subsequently promoted to a higher position with a salary of \$86,974 in another agency. In fact, the employee earned the equivalent of one year of college credits in a non-technical field and has been disciplined as a result of this deception.

These and similar cases demonstrate that District government agencies must conduct careful and thorough background evaluations of all applicants under serious consideration for employment to ensure that all government personnel meet acceptable qualification and integrity standards.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based upon the findings of these investigations, the OIG recommends that all District government agencies review their applicant screening procedures and ensure that there are adequate safeguards in place to eliminate, or at least significantly reduce, the risk of hiring individuals with fraudulent credentials or qualifications. Some of these safeguards should include the following:

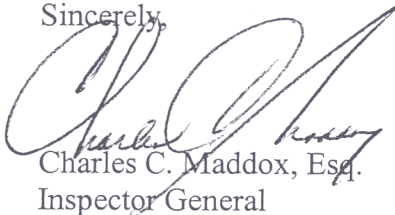
- Clearly establish and advertise educational and other requirements for specific positions.
- Require **all** applicants to complete and sign the District of Columbia Government Employment Application which sets forth criminal penalties for failure to provide truthful information on the application.
- Maintain an applicant-screening checklist which identifies the personal information that should be verified as well as the identity of the individual who conducted the background checks. At a minimum, the OIG suggests the verification of prior employment, education, and professional licensure/certification where appropriate.

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- Require applicants to provide original or certified copies of academic transcripts and professional licenses and certificates.
- Contact the U.S. Department of Education to verify accreditation of suspect academic institutions.
- Resolve any issues related to incomplete, evasive, or suspicious information submitted on the application form, resume, or other personal information submitted with the application for employment.
- Maintain a background investigation section of the employee personnel file where all information relevant to the hiring decision is retained. Included in this section should be a copy of the advertisement and statement of the minimum qualifications for the position.
- Extend offers of employment contingent upon the receipt of verification of personal information where the position must be filled immediately.

If you have any questions concerning this MIR, please call me or Alfred Miller, Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Investigations, at (202) 727-1015.

Sincerely,



Charles C. Maddox, Esq.  
Inspector General

CCM/tc

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